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U.S. Reports Russians Coded the Radio Data In Test of New Missile

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15 (AP) — The Soviet Union has tested a new submarine missile that radioed its performance data to monitors in code, preventing United States intercept experts from fully checking the performance, Administration officials said today.

The pending strategic arms treaty, signed but not yet ratified, bars the encoding of missile test telemetry or otherwise "deliberately" concealing vital data on missile developments.

Although that treaty is still before the Senate, Administration officials said the United States had made it clear to the Soviet Union that it expected the Russians to abide by its anticoncealment terms pending ratification.

The new test, which was kept secret for several weeks, could reopen an argument over whether the new treaty limiting strategic nuclear weapons can be satisfactorily verified to prevent cheating and whether the Russians will attempt to evade its provisions.

Opponents of the treaty have attacked the pact, in part, on verification grounds.

According to Administration sources who asked not to be identified, the new missile tested in late January was clearly intended to be fired from submarines.

Apparently with the aid of surveillance satellites and other devices, Americans were able to determine that the missile, which landed in a remote area in the north of the Soviet Union, had the ability to carry larger nuclear warheads than present submarine-launched Soviet missiles and was powered by solid fuel instead of the more corrosive and less reliable liquid fuel previously used in such weapons.

But it appears that the encrypting, or encoding, of the radio telemetry prevented experts from gauging the all-important accuracy of the new weapon.